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Third Party Qualified Sanitary Surveyors

Washington state drinking water rules require all Group A public water systems to have a sanitary survey once every three to five years. The Department of Health Office of Drinking Water (ODW) conducts sanitary surveys. However, in some counties ODW contracts with local health jurisdictions (LHJ) or independent consultants to conduct the surveys and provide technical assistance. These contractors are called “third party qualified sanitary surveyors” (QSS).

In most counties, the LHJ serves as QSS. If the LHJ chooses not to participate, independent consultants serve as QSS.

The Third Party Qualified Sanitary Surveyor Program

ODW developed the Third Party Qualified Sanitary Surveyor Program to provide more cost-effective service by using local experts. The program provides the framework to train and qualify individuals who perform sanitary surveys or provide technical assistance on behalf of ODW.

Roles and Responsibilities of a QSS

The purpose of a sanitary survey is to identify problems that could disrupt a water system’s capacity to provide safe and reliable drinking water. A QSS does not correct problems or take enforcement actions. Instead, ODW uses information from the QSS reports to recommend improvements or take necessary enforcement actions.

Incidentally, a QSS with a vested interest in a particular water system cannot survey that system. A vested interest may include being a board member or owner, an employee, contract operator or even a customer of the system.

DOH Approved QSS List

ODW maintains a list of professionals qualified to conduct sanitary surveys and provide assistance for water systems. Individuals on the list must agree to follow ODW processes and procedures. They also must meet minimum qualifications and complete ODW’s two-part third party QSS training program:

- Part 1: 3-day classroom training on how to conduct sanitary surveys.
- Part 2: 3-day advanced field training completed after the QSS conducts at least three sanitary surveys.



The ODW – QSS Agreement

ODW signs an agreement with each person on the QSS list authorizing them to act on behalf of ODW. The individuals agree to meet two conditions:

1. They will follow established ODW processes and procedures for conducting sanitary surveys and providing technical assistance.
2. They, not their affiliated organizations, are the ones qualified to do sanitary surveys or provide technical assistance. As such, they are the only ones in their organizations who may actually do the inspections and act on behalf of the state.

If a QSS fails to meet these conditions, ODW will cancel the agreement and remove the individual's name from the approved Third Party QSS list.

QSS Qualifications

To be a third party qualified sanitary surveyor, an individual must:

- Meet Washington's minimum registration or employment qualifications with drinking water expertise. Jobs that qualify a person to work as a QSS include professional engineer, engineer-in-training, water-distribution manager level 2 or greater, water-treatment plant operator level 2 or greater, registered sanitarian, or environmental health specialist.
- Complete a Third Party QSS application form.
- Attend ODW Third Party QSS training sessions.
- Maintain ODW Third Party QSS qualifications by attending refresher training at least once every three years.

Refresher Training

Available refresher training includes the QSS Phase I and Phase II training series or classes and seminars that meet the Washington relevancy training criteria for certified operators. If a QSS has already attended the QSS Phase I and Phase II training series, ODW recommends one of the classes offered for certified operators.

A QSS who attends certified operator training must register as a Third Party QSS to receive refresher-training credit. He or she must send proof of attendance to Sara Brallier, Office of Drinking Water, PO Box 47822, Olympia, Washington, 98504-7822.

The training calendar is online at http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/dw/our_main_pages/training.htm. Look under "Training Links" for up-to-date course schedules.

For more information:

Call the Office of Drinking Water at (800) 521-0323 or the:

Southwest Regional Office (360) 236-3030
Northwest Regional Office (253) 395-6750
Eastern Regional Office (509) 456-3115

